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Thumos and doxa as intermediates in the Republic

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ABSTRACT

Broadly speaking, something can be called intermediate for Plato insofar as it occupies a place between two objects, poles, places, time, or principles. But this broad meaning of the intermediate has been eclipsed by the Aristotelian critique of the intermediate *objects* of the *dianoia*, so that it has become more difficult to think of the intermediates as *functions* of the soul. The aim of this paper is to show how, in the *Republic*, *thumos* is analogously treated as an intermediate with other kinds of intermediate objects, and tentatively to relate this psychological intermediate in a broader theory with *doxa*, as its epistemological ground in the course of action.

Keywords: intermediate, *thumos*, *doxa*, opinion, spirit, *metaxu*

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to “intermediates” in Plato, one is tempted to think solely of mathematical intermediates, the objects of *dianoia* in book 6 of the *Republic*. Whether or not it comes from Aristotle’s critique on such intermediates, one must admit that he himself forgets to describe as intermediates some of the most important aspects of Plato’s psychology and ethical theory¹. But the word “*metaxu*” has undoubtedly a broader meaning in Plato’s dialogues. As Joseph Souilhé already noted in his thesis in 1919², Plato can be called a “philosopher of the intermediates” insofar as the aim of the whole of his philosophy is to bridge the gaps between what is taken to be two poles or two kinds of reality. Souilhé’s first aim was to classify the wide range of intermediates into categories: “psychological” (*thumos*, *erōs*, *doxa*, *dianoia*), “ethical” (*sophrōsynē*, *dikaoisunē*, *bios meson*), “political”, “cosmological”, and “metaphysical”; a second consideration was to question whether there was a more systematic link between those intermediates.

This paper addresses the following question, which is crucial for the meaning we are to give to Plato’s moral psychology in the *Republic*: is there a link between *thumos* as intermediate and its epistemological counterpart, *doxa*? Let us recall briefly what *thumos* and *doxa* stand for. In book 4 of the *Republic* (436b–441c), Socrates argues that the soul is composed of three so-called “parts” or rather “functions”: the reasoning part (*to logistikon*), the desiring part (*to epithumetikon*), and an intermediary part (*to thumoeides* or *thumos*), which is often translated as “spirit”³. This intermediary function is presented as having a key role — in the best case — to mediate reason’s commands, against the power of the desiring part. For whatever reason Plato shifts from a bipartition of the

soul (with reason and desire) to a tripartition, *thumos* introduces a new way of thinking of the relation between reason and desire: *thumos* is immediately thought to be a *metaxu*. As for *doxa*, which we take to mean *opinion*, but also *belief*, this is certainly an ubiquitous concept in Plato’s dialogues which is not tied with any systematic presentation; nevertheless, as it will be shown, *doxa* is presented in the *Republic* as a *metaxu* too, between knowledge and ignorance, having its object somewhere between what is and what is not.

The aim of this paper is certainly not to look for a system of intermediates. It will thus not be argued that *thumos* is the “seat” of *doxa*. As Sylvain Delcominette already showed convincingly, one should not conflate what appears to be a theory of the “parts” or “functions” of the soul, and what we could call a theory of “faculties” or “capacities”⁴. Indeed, insofar as *doxa* is concerned, it is quite clear from the *Republic* that *doxa* can be at least ascribed to different “structures” or characters or, broadly speaking, to the “agent”; it seems conversely impossible to ascribe the faculty of *doxa* to a specific “part” of the soul, and even less so to ascribe different “kinds” of *doxa* to different parts⁵. Nevertheless, the issue persists: if we are to accept the idea that there is an ethical function of *thumos* in the tripartite soul, which is manifest for the auxiliaries, for example in the form of what has been called an “imperfect virtue”⁶, one has to look for the epistemological grounds of such virtues or dispositions.

The question I want to raise is slightly different from the ones which try to ascribe systematically *doxa* (or whatever function) as an intermediate *faculty* to *thumos* as an intermediate *part*; my question would rather be: is there a reason why we would ascribe *doxa* to *thumos* because these two are both *intermediates*? In what follows, I will try to show that there is

a homogenous theory of the functionings of the intermediates, that leads us to ascribe in a privileged way *doxa* to *thumos* in certain ethical situations.

1. THUMOS AS INTERMEDIATE

The argument for positing *thumos* as intermediate is found in book 4 of the *Republic* (439e-441c), it is not the place here to recall the precise argument that leads to the discovery of the tripartite soul⁷, but it is interesting to note that the “intermediate” dimension of *thumos* can be understood in a polysemic way.

- 1) Meaning 1: *Thumos* is found out by contrasting its function first with desire (439e6-440e6), then with reason (441a5-c2); it is neither desire nor reason even if some of its features seem identical. *Thumos* is then first described as a kind of “interval” covering a variety of ambivalent actions and passions: being angry or ashamed, resisting desires or fighting for some values, etc., all of them being best described as in-between reason and desire.
- 2) Meaning 2: *Thumos* is nevertheless a “median position” between the two extremes regarding virtue; if *thumos* is first thought as an interval, it represents at the end of the argument an autonomous function (*eidos, genē*) of the soul in-between the two other poles, the range of actions and passions being unified by a single class-term (439e4; 440e8; 441c6). In this respect, the *thumoeidic* person, as it is clearly showed by the examples of Leontius, the honest man (who does

not seem to be a “wise man” though), children, animals and Ulysses, are not paragons of virtue, but they may nevertheless embody an honest behavior without being completely virtuous.

- 3) Meaning 3: According to Socrates, *thumos* helps reason to fight desires whenever it is possible and provided that it is well educated; *thumos* is an auxiliary (*epikouros*) for reason (441a2-3). A third meaning of “intermediate” emerges here, insofar as *thumos* is not only an interval and a median position, but also transcribes reason’s recommendation in the whole agent. In other words, *thumos* “mediates” reason’s rule in a positive way⁸.

The polysemy of “intermediate” in our passage may explain how difficult it is to ascribe a clear-cut theory of the cognitive power of *thumos*. Examples of conflicting situations (thirst, and then the example of Leontius) show that a complex epistemic process is going on in the agent, which relies on different understandings, depending on the function of the soul that leads the course of the action⁹. The action is morally distinct whether we rely on a) what is pleasant and painful, b) or on what is worthy or valued by others, c) or on what is reasonable and/or rational. There is a supplementary difference, which has been notoriously described through the distinction between good-independent and good-dependent principles¹⁰, whether we act out of mere compulsion, or out of knowledge, or out of a *doxa* which is potentially right or wrong.

If we take the example of Leontius (439e6-440a6), his desire to see the corpses refers to a cognitive understanding that confers pleasure

to this kind of morbid desire, whereas his anger against his same desire relies on a internalized judgement according to which taking pleasure in the misfortune of others is morally bad. By contrast, Ulysses (441b2-c2) may well be driven by his revengeful anger to kill the suitors out of a judgement that condemns such a vile behavior, but he forms a rational (yet not necessarily morally just) judgement that prevents him to do so right away, probably to make his revenge more efficient.

The question is: in the course of action, what kind of activity does the agent enact, and by which part of the soul? A straightforward answer is that the desiring part *desires, needs, craves, pushes and pulls*, that the reasoning part *reasons, learns, contemplates*, and finally that the *thumoeides* affects a state of mind in the agent that is *anger, shame*, and other emotions that are precisely intermediate in being neither a desire nor a reasoning (meaning 1). How can we characterize *thumos*'s function in this tripartite model? Following Angela Hobbs's analysis¹¹, we can say that the *thumos* "*values*", that is: gives personal importance to principles or objects, and leads the agent to commit himself in what he finds good, beautiful and just because that's what he values most. Anger and shame are thus intermediate behaviors that exemplify the intermediate *position* of the character regarding virtue (meaning 2). As a motivational principle, *thumos* has then a role to play in each action we make, regardless of whether we are philosopher or not, depraved or not, *philotimos* or not. For in the course of action, there is a *desire*, and either *knowledge* proper, or *doxa*, right or wrong; and in the last case, *thumos* gives the content of the *doxa* a value that commits the agent in his action, all the more so if *reason* pervades or produces this *doxa*. What is at stake here is the way *thumos* as a part of the soul might be able to grasp something as a form or appearance

of the good, insofar as moral judgments bear upon something which is potentially related to a kind of knowledge (meaning 3). It is all the more important for our topic, for if a kind of virtue – an imperfect one¹² – is related to *thumos*, notably for the auxiliaries, it has to do with their ability to acquire some intermediary disposition between knowledge and mere obedience and compulsion.

Taking the same previous examples of Leontius and Ulysses, one thing is to say that there is, in every situation, a judgement that relies on grounds that can be pleasure and pain, values and reason, and another thing to ascribe to each function of the soul a definite cognitive power. Leontius and Ulysses have, to say the least, a conflicting behavior; one way to understand this conflict is to posit opposite judgements on what is actually good and bad – each judgement coming from a general cognitive apprehension of the situation depending on different criteria. It is not necessary for our present purpose to claim that desire and *thumos* have their own cognitive capacity; let us just say, in a more economical manner, that the rational part *reasons*; *thumos listens* to reason and acts according to a *doxa* that comes from reason giving it some value; and the desiring part *desires*, but might infect the *doxa* with its own criterion of appraisal, that is pleasure and pain. *Thumos* is intermediary because its *function* is to give value to a *doxa*, wherever it may come from, committing the agent into this system of values.

2. THUMOS AS PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO DOXA

How can we explain the relative privileged link between *thumos* and *doxa* in the *Republic*? Instead of focusing on a putative theory be-

tween faculties and parts of the soul, we may try to follow another path to link the two functions, in positing an analogy between *thumos* and *doxa* as *intermediates*. For as a matter of fact, the way Socrates describes *doxa* as an intermediate in book 5 can be well compared with the way *thumos* is discovered in book 4. Again, three meanings could be found of *metaxu* when applied to *doxa*.

- 1) Meaning 1. Given that there is a wide range of objects and discourses between authentic knowledge, and ignorance, there must be an “interval” between these two poles (477a9-b1). *Doxa* is the name given to what is “in-between” being first contrasted with knowledge (477e8-478a1), and then with ignorance (478b6-c5). Its object being between “what is” and “what is not”, *doxa* refers to this interval, which we know to be very wide: from an ordinary perceptive opinion on what is beautiful to a strong judgement on what is just and good, the reign of the opinion is potentially infinite. This first meaning of *doxa* relies, so to say, on its extension. Socrates ends his argument by insisting on the operation of considering *doxa* precisely as an interval defined by these two poles, even if it is in a negative way, in order to mark the limits of this capacity.

Now, we said that, if something could be shown, as it were, to be and not to be at the same time, it would be intermediate between what purely is and what in every way is not (μεταξὺ κείσθαι τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς ὄντος τε καὶ τοῦ πάντως μὴ ὄντος), and that neither knowledge nor ignorance would

be set over it, but something intermediate (μεταξὺ) between ignorance and knowledge? - Correct. - And now the thing we call opinion has emerged as being intermediate (μεταξὺ) between them? - It has. - Apparently, then, it only remains for us to find what participates in both being and not being and cannot correctly be called purely one or the other, in order that, if there is such a thing, we can rightly call it the opinable, thereby setting the extremes over the extremes and the intermediate over the intermediate (τοῖς μὲν ἄκροις τὰ ἄκρα, τοῖς δὲ μεταξὺ τὰ μεταξὺ ἀποδιδόντες). Isn't that so? - It is. (*Resp.* V, 478d5-e5, trans. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve).

As for *thumos*, “setting the intermediate over the intermediate” is already giving *doxa* its place, and preventing it from overflowing reason's function.

- 2) Meaning 2. *Doxa* has power; where does it come from? *Doxa* is not only a vague interval but also a “position” between knowledge and ignorance. As a judgement, a belief, or even as a perceptual image, *doxa* gives the illusion to maintain something steady, even if plural and wrong. This is the case of the “lovers of sights” and “sounds” who claim to be experts in beauty (475d1-e1; 479d3-e5). Because those who do have a *doxa* act and speak as if they possess a real knowledge – and precisely because they do not abstain or claim their ignorance, *doxa* is a *metaxu* between knowledge and ignorance insofar as they assert something which, even if false, pretends to be real and true. It is then not sufficient to demarcate *doxa* in its extension, in be-

tween what is and what is not; Socrates has to define *doxa* as a *metaxu* in a hierarchical way, as a *median* position between what is truly known and what is simply ignored. In giving its right place as median position, Socrates makes *doxa* a class of judgement in regard to true knowledge, accounting for its inconsistency and nevertheless its psychological power.

- 3) Meaning 3. But why does Socrates then admit that *doxa* is a capacity, rather than a non-capacity, as ignorance is?¹³ Last, *doxa* is described as a possible “mediation” through the two other poles (knowledge as a capacity, and ignorance as a non-capacity), insofar as people would accept, in the best case scenario, that there is a difference between the *philosopher* and the *philodoxos*. We know, from the *Meno* (97b9), that *doxa* is as efficient in the action, if true, as knowledge. Here in the *Republic*, Socrates makes a further step. In forming a true opinion, in being *persuaded* by the philosopher that there is indeed a difference between knowledge and opinion (476d8-e3), one might expect, at best, that one can hold a *doxa* knowing that it is a *doxa* and not knowledge. This is not to say that *doxa* could, if true, be as valuable as knowledge; but in succeeding the refutation and persuasion, Socrates could make *doxa* a (non-rational) mean to assert the superiority of reason¹⁴. I will come to this point in my third section.

This analogy between the functioning of both intermediates, *doxa* and *thumos*, does not necessarily entail that there is a privileged link

between ethical and epistemological intermediates. And there is no hint in the description of *doxa* which is explicitly said about its ethical counterpart, *thumos*. Nevertheless, it is interesting to show how these two intermediates in the *Republic* are associated to give a full account on what it is to have an opinion, a belief, a representation of a value, as the experience of the agent¹⁵.

2.1. The doxastic object of thumos

First of all, *thumos* seems to have a privileged range of objects, all of them reducible to *timē* (honor and esteem) and *nikē* (victory) according to book 9 (581a9-10). The *philotimos* (lover of honor) behaves according to *doxai* that refer to these two objects. Now, these two terms could apply to many other objects, persons or actions, insofar as they contribute to acquire some *timē* or *nikē*; for example, public honors or presents are thought to be necessary to acquire more *timē* (social honor) in general. It goes the same way with victory, beauty, courage and manliness, love for action rather than love for discourse and knowledge, power, love for gymnastics rather than love for music, etc. All these objects are valued by the *philotimos* with the view to acquire more *timē*. In theory, one can “value” anything, so as to become a privileged object for his *thumos*, but the *philotimos* selects what he *values* for the sake of *timē*. To put it in a nutshell, the kind of action attributed to *thumos* in book 4 (to esteem and to value) is generally (though not systematically) equivalently understood as a special kind of desire: “to love *timē*” as an object¹⁶. *Timē* and *nikē*, which refer to relative status are best described as *doxai*, thought as reputation and all the kinds of judgements that refer to this very reputation:

what people say, praise and blame, rumor, and further mode of appearances such as glory, shame, etc.

We are now in a position to have a better understanding of this meaning of intermediate as “interval”, both for *doxa* and *thumos*. There is an intimate connection between those two intermediates not so much because of a so-called cognitive ability of *thumos*, but because both the function of the soul and the capacity pervades a very wide range of objects, some of which are not easy to refer to desire or reason only, as book 9 recalls:

Won't a money-maker say that the pleasure of being honored (τὴν τοῦ τιμᾶσθαι ἡδονήν) and that of learning are worthless compared to that of making a profit, if he gets no money from them? — He will. — What about an honor-lover (ὁ φιλότιμος)? Doesn't he think that the pleasure of making money is vulgar (φορτικήν τινα ἡγεῖται) and that the pleasure of learning — except insofar as it brings him honor (μὴ μάθημα τιμὴν φέρει) — is smoke and nonsense? — He does. — And as for a philosopher, what do you suppose he thinks the other pleasures are worth compared to that of knowing where the truth lies and always being in some such pleasant condition while learning? Won't he think that they are far behind? (*Resp.* IX, 581c10-e3, trans. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve).

Objects of *thumos* are always *doxai* in the sense that they are social and political constructions of what people value most in a given city. No wonder then, that the objects of *thumos* are potentially instable, inconsistent, and rest all the more so on sensible particulars and situations.

2.2. *Thumos gives power to doxa to overcome desires*

A second important aspect of the analogous functioning between *thumos* and *doxa* is the way the first gives strength to the latter, and especially over pleasure and pain.

But what happens if, instead, he believes (ἡγήται) that someone has been unjust to him? Isn't the spirit within him boiling and angry, fighting for what he believes to be just (συμμαχεῖ τῷ δοκοῦντι δίκαιῳ)? Won't it endure hunger, cold, and the like and keep on till it is victorious, not ceasing from noble actions until it either wins, dies, or calms down, called to heel by the reason within him, like a dog by a shepherd? (*Resp.* IV, 440c7-d3, trans. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve).

The honest man holds a *doxa* on what is just and unjust. It is not said how the agent (in our case an honest person, but not necessarily a “virtuous” one) forms its belief on justice, but it appears that this belief gains its force through his spirited part, through bodily symptoms and anger. *Thumos* is not the function through which a *doxa* is formed, but it is, for sure, that through which it gains its force and value in the course of action. As it has been often pointed out, there are many desires that are supported by a *doxa*, especially in the case of the characters in book 8 and 9, for example the oligarch¹⁷. It may even be the case that an acratia person is best understood as an agent whose *doxai* follow opposite directions¹⁸. So again *thumos* is certainly not the only function in the soul that deals with *doxa*; rather, *thumos* is an auxiliary powerful enough to overcome natural pleasure and pain (“hunger, cold, and the like”) or even

life (“either wins, dies, or calms down”), in giving *doxa* a sufficient value against competing desires that would follow a pleasure/pain criterion.

2.3. *Thumos gives doxa a relative stability*

A third feature of the *thumos/doxa* relation is made explicit in book 4 through the description of civic courage of the auxiliaries. Even if *doxa* is volatile, not being grounded on reason, *thumos* is capable to transform a *doxa* into a quasi-permanent disposition.

Then, you should understand that, as far as we could, we were doing something similar when we selected our soldiers and educated them in music and physical training. What we were contriving was nothing other than this: that because they had the proper nature and upbringing, they would absorb the laws in the finest possible way (ὅτι κάλλιστα τοὺς νόμους πεισθέντες δέξοιντο), just like a dye (ὥσπερ βαφὴν), so that their belief (δόξα) about what they should fear and all the rest would become so fast (δευσοποιοῦς) that even such extremely effective detergents as pleasure, pain, fear, and desire wouldn’t wash it out — and pleasure is much more potent than any powder, washing soda, or soap. This power to preserve (τὴν δὴ τοιαύτην δύναμιν καὶ σωτηρίαν) through everything the correct and law-inculcated belief (δόξης ὀρθῆς τε καὶ νομίμου) about what is to be feared and what isn’t is what I call courage, unless, of course, you say otherwise. (*Resp.* IV, 429e7-430e5. trans. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve)

In this passage, the origin of *doxa* is made clear enough: coming from law and reason, a series of beliefs are internalized by the auxiliaries through different means (music, gymnastic, and other kinds of training that have been depicted especially in book 3). Because the origin of *doxa* is reason and law, it is a just and correct one (*orthē*). But it is not because it is a *right* opinion or belief that it lasts in the face of pleasure, pains and other passions: *thumos*, which is known to be one of the tendencies that has been the attention of the educator in the prior education, has the power (*dunamis*) to preserve (*sōtēria*) the opinion against other desires. A difference then should be made between having an opinion, believing it is true and assenting to it on the one hand, and having an opinion that constitutes one’s character on the other hand. Of course, this is an “imperfect” virtue which is described here, insofar as counterfactual situations may well destroy the power of *thumos*; but it remains true that only the power of *thumos* conveys the *doxa* to be steady in spite of its ontological and epistemological instability.

What is important then is not only the fact that the *doxa* is right or wrong, but also the way *thumos* (and the whole agent) considers it as a dynamic intermediate to perform a good or (imperfect) virtuous action. If we want to account for the epistemological processes of *thumos*, we should not properly say that it *has* or *forms* a *doxa*, but rather that it gives *doxa* some of the properties to become not only a judgement, either propositional, or perceptual or both, but a real valuable belief.

3. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE INTERMEDIATES IN THE EDUCATION

It is now possible to account for the importance of the notion of “intermediate” during education in the *Republic*, in giving *doxa* and *thumos* the role of *mediation* towards the positive pole from which they are defined as an in-between position.

At the end of book 4, Socrates concludes, with the help of a metaphor, on what it is to harmonize our own soul in giving a last definition of “justice”, after he gave definitions of the three other cardinal virtues.

And in truth justice is, it seems, something of this sort. However, it isn’t concerned with someone’s doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own. One who is just does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part or allow the various classes within him to meddle with each other. He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself (συναρμόσαντα τρία ὄντα) like three limiting notes in a musical scale (ὥσπερ ὄρους τρεῖς ἀρμονίας) — high, low, and middle (νεάτης τε καὶ ὑπάτης καὶ μέσης). He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between (εἰ ἄλλα ἄττα μεταξύ τυγχάνει ὄντα), and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act. And when he does anything, whether acquiring wealth, taking care of his body, engaging in politics, or in private contracts — in all of these, he believes (ἡγούμενον) that the action is just and

fine that preserves this inner harmony and helps achieve it (ἢ ἂν ταύτην τὴν ἕξιν σώζῃ τε καὶ συναπεργάζεται), and calls it so (ὀνομάζοντα), and regards as wisdom the knowledge that oversees such actions (σοφίαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιστατοῦσαν ταύτῃ τῇ πράξει ἐπιστήμην). And he believes that the action that destroys this harmony is unjust, and calls it so, and regards the belief that oversees it as ignorance (ἀμαθίαν δὲ τὴν ταύτῃ αὐτῇ ἐπιστατοῦσαν δόξαν). (*Resp.* 443c9-444a2; trans. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve).

Socrates has already used the musical metaphor to convey an image of a harmonized soul in book 2 and 3, notably in 410c-412a, where the aim of the first education by music and gymnastics was to find a balance in the soul of the future guardian between her/his *thumoeides* and her/his *philosophical nature*, in “tuning” them. It is by this tuning that one could achieve a musical “chord”, through the equilibrium between these dispositions (412a4-7)¹⁹. In book 4, the chord depends on the knowledge and *sophia* that comes from the law, in tuning the three strings of the harmony which correspond to each function of the soul. The *harmonia* is then not only a tuning between dispositions, but a hierarchical ordering of the soul’s three parts, so that reason should rule over the others (*epistatousa*), *thumos* should “preserve” (*sōzē*) reason’s rule — as we have seen through the dying metaphor (429e7-430e5), and the desiring part should obey this disposition. So that from book 3 to book 4, *thumos* is not anymore a natural tendency in the soul, but should become the equivalent of the *mesē* in the musical instrument, that is the position through which the interval between reason and desire is made definite and virtuous.

One may wonder about the oddity of the sentence: “and any others there may be in between”, as if there were other intermediates than *thumos*. Plato probably refers here to a tetrachord, and mentions only the principal fixed strings (*horoi*) — the *hypate* and *nete* being the lower and the highest string, the *mese* and *paramese* being in between —, the movable other strings depending on the type of *harmonia* wanted²⁰. It is unlikely that Plato means that there are other “intermediates” between reason and desire than *thumos*; rather, we should understand that, given the fixed position of these three strings, some variations may occur between the just persons, whether they belong to the ruling class, the auxiliary class, or the third class of the city, and whether their natural disposition is more akin to one of the natural tendencies that have been described in book 3. In other words, *thumos* as a position in-between reason and desire in book 4 overlaps the “interval” of actions and dispositions that it covers in book 3. Then, we must recognize that there is a certain “plasticity” of the *thumos* that can be molded, shaped and modeled during education, in order, at least, to have an “imperfect” virtuous person.

The two last sentences are quite relevant as to the link between *thumos* and *doxa* as *mediation*.

Knowledge (*epistēmē*) is presented as the sole ground for virtue and *sophia*, whereas it is a *doxa* that is assimilated to disharmony, but also to ignorance (*amathia*). This strong dichotomy between knowledge and *doxa* does not seem to be coherent with what is said of *doxa* in book 5 where ignorance is distinct from it from an ontological point of view. A solution to this apparent paradox would be to refer to a distinction between a right and a wrong *doxa*, the latter being responsible of ignorance and vice. However, it is not a right *doxa* which is responsible for virtue either, but

proper knowledge. So I would suggest, rather, that this description of this harmonious person is not of a “real” virtuous man who would have the knowledge of it, but a mere ordinary man, who already has a *doxa* on what is the principle of the harmony or disharmony in his soul. Grube translates the “ἡγούμενον” as “he believes”, as if it were another *doxa* whose object itself is the difference between knowledge and *doxa*. What is maybe an over-translation is getting to the point: what the honest man has is a “thinking”, an ethical judgement, which, depending on the education of his *thumos*, values reason and law as the rule of his action. A similar situation occurs in book 5, when the philosopher finally persuades the other citizens that there is a difference between *doxa* and knowledge, even if the citizens do not have access to proper knowledge. We must then recognize that *thumos*’s function here is to value reason and law as the proper origin of right *doxa*; this explains why the honest man finally “names” *sophia* the rules and recommendations that *thumos* is inclined to follow. Here, *thumos* has a crucial role to play in recognizing, through a right *doxa*, what falls within reason or the law’s rule, and what falls within mere unjustified *doxa*. The median position of the intermediate is not enough to ascribe to one of the opposites a positive value; another function of the intermediate is to be a step forward to the positive pole. In other words, the intermediate gives a meaning to the poles in being a mediation between them and positing them as extremes as it does, and valuing reason, good, fine, noble, as positive poles rather than desire, pleasure and pain.

CONCLUSION

All these striking links and similarities between *thumos* and *doxa* should not lead us to posit that *thumos* is a seat of *doxa*, nor that, I contend, *thumos* is an epistemological faculty similar to *doxa* as far as ethical judgments are concerned. Plato never says that explicitly and has probably no reason to do so. We cannot go further then in positing a system of intermediate faculties. However, *thumos* is said to be sensitive to reason in a way that compels us to make it an essential psychic function to give *doxa* a practical meaning. If there is no theory between ethical and epistemological intermediates, there are, indeed, *analogous* operational relations between them. *Thumos* and *doxa* are polarized intervals, but also positions between real and pre-existent valued poles (what is valued as good), and finally dynamic starting points to access the positive pole (reason's rule).

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NOTES

1 For example, as it has been recalled by (Cooper 1998, chap. 10), Aristotle may use the platonic tripartite model of the soul in his *Ethics*, but *thumos* has no longer the status of the intermediate – at least as it has been defined by Plato – between reason and desire, for the tripartite model is used to convey three distinct type of desires.

2 See (Souilhé 1919).

3 For a general presentation of *thumos* in Plato, see (Renaut 2014a).

4 (Delcomminette 2008).

5 See especially (Gerson 2003, 102–12).

6 On this point, see (Kamtekar 1998).

7 For an extensive description of the argument, see (Cornford 1912; Stocks 1915; Hall 1963; Penner 1971; Renaut 2014a; Wilburn 2015). We should bear in mind that the autonomy of this part has been questioned by commentators for they see either an *ad hoc* argument to fit in the tripartite model of the city (Cornford), or that it is not clear whether *thumos* is distinct from reason and desire (Penner), as if its functions could be reduced to one or the other. Some other commentators (Smith 1999) endorse a strong version of the autonomy of this intermediate, but remain skeptical about the overall coherence of this psychological theory. I thank N. Smith for having pointed out that thesis out to me.

8 On different meaning of *metaxu* as far as *thumos* is concerned, see (Brennan 2012), esp. p. 122, where *thumos* is presented as “bond, medium and middle-term”. See also (Renaut 2014b) on which this conclusion is based.

9 On this point, see (Crombie 1962, 341–68).

10 See esp. (Carone 2001) for the consequences of this distinction.

11 See (Hobbs 2000).

12 I am relying here on (Kamtekar 1998).

13 I thank N. Baima for pointing this difficulty out to me. On this passage, see also (Szaif 2007).

14 (Szaif 2007), esp. §54-58, who rightly insists on the link between the transient mode of acquaintance of *doxa*, and the possibility, nevertheless, for *doxa* to be a possible transition towards understanding. About the

philodoxos, Szaif writes: “They are in an intermediate state which is not knowledge but at least provides some starting-points in the quest for real understanding”.

15 See (Lafrance 1982), who recalls quite rightly that *doxa* should not be understood in an exclusive epistemological and ontological point of view. In a way, I think the *Republic* gives us a fuller account of what it is to have a belief than the *Meno*, precisely in associating *thumos* and *doxa*.

16 See (Wersinger 2001, 191).

17 See *Resp.* 554d9-e5, and on this point (Irwin 1995, 217–18), and for a stronger view (Bobonich 2002, 317).

18 For the strong view that *akrasia* stages competing *doxai* from different functions of the soul, see (Carone 2001); I agree rather with (Kamtekar 2006), esp. p. 186, in saying that personification of *doxai* does not necessarily entail that each function has its own doxastic power.

19 On this passage in book 3, see (Wersinger 2001, 171–79; Brancacci 2005).

20 See (Barker 1989, 11–13).